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Celestial Country

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The Celestial Country

FROM THE RYTHM OF SAINT BERNARD OF CLUNY, *Translated by* JOHN MASON NEALE

NEW YORK
Edwin S. Gorham
CHURCH MISSIONS HOUSE

KC 7716

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Prefatory Note

THE poems of Bernard, the Monk of Cluny, *De Contemptu Mundi*, is one of the most remarkable of the Latin hymns which Archbishop Trench first introduced to popular notice. In the year 1849, Trench published excerpts from the original poem of three thousand lines, and ten years later Dr. John Mason Neale translated a cento of these verses, and produced the hymn "Jerusalem the Golden," which, as Dr. Trench says "has won a place in the affections of Christian people as a priceless acquisition." The feeling of heavenly homesickness has never been expressed with more thrilling power of intensity than in this grand mediæval poem.

Bernard, a monk of the celebrated Monastery of Cluny, under the Abbot Peter the Venerable, was born of English parents at the old seaport of Morlaix, in Brittany, and lived in the twelfth century. Thus being a contemporary of the greater Bernard, Abbot of Clairvaux. This is all we know of the author of the poem on Contempt of the World.

E. W.

Feast of St. Matthew.

The Celestial Country

THE world is very evil,
The times are waxing late;
Be sober and keep vigil,
The Judge is at the gate—
The Judge that comes in mercy,
The Judge that comes with might,
To terminate the evil,
To diadem the right.
When the just and gentle Monarch
Shall summon from the tomb,
Let man, the guilty, tremble,
For Man, the God, shall doom
Arise, arise, good Christian,
Let right to wrong succeed;
Let penitential sorrow
To heavenly gladness lead;
To the light that hath no evening,
That knows nor moon nor sun,
The light so new and golden,
The light that is but one.
And when the Sole-Begotten
Shall render up once more
The Kingdom to the Father,

Whose own it was before,—
Then glory yet unheard of
Shall shed abroad its ray,
Resolving all enigmas,
An endless Sabbath-day.
Then, then from his oppressors
The Hebrew shall go free,
And celebrate in triumph
The year of Jubilee;
And the sunlit Land that recks not
Of tempest nor of fight,
Shall fold within its bosom
Each happy Israelite:
The Home of fadeless splendor,
Of flowers that fear no thorn,
Where they shall dwell as children,
Who here as exiles mourn.
Midst power that knows no limit,
And wisdom free from bound,
The Beatific Vision
Shall glad the saints around:
The peace of all the faithful,
The calm of all the blest,
Inviolate, unvaried,
Divinest, sweetest, best.

YES, Peace! for war is needless,—
Yes, calm! for storm is past,—
And goal from finished labor,
And anchorage at last.

That peace—but who may claim it?
The guileless in their way,
Who keep the ranks of battle,
Who mean the things they say:
The peace that is for heaven,
And shall be too, for earth:
The palace that re-echoes
With festal song and mirth;
The garden, breathing spices,
The paradise on high;
Grace beautified to glory,
Unceasing minstrelsy.
There nothing can be feeble,
There none can ever mourn,
There nothing is divided,
There nothing can be torn.
'Tis fury, ill, and scandal,
'Tis peaceless peace below;
Peace, endless, strifeless, ageless,
The halls of Syon know.
O happy, holy portion,
Refection for the blest;
True vision of true beauty,
Sweet cure of all distrest!

STRIVE, man, to win that glory,
Toil, man, to gain that light;
Send hope before to grasp it,
Till hope be lost in sight:

Till Jesus gives the portion
Those blessed souls to fill,
The insatiate, yet satisfied,
The full, yet craving still.
That fulness and that craving
Alike are free from pain,
Where thou, midst heavenly citizens,
A home like theirs shall gain.
Here is the warlike trumpet;
There, life set free from sin;
When to the last Great Supper
The faithful shall come in:
When the heavenly net is laden
With fishes many and great;
So glorious in its fulness,
Yet so inviolate:
And the perfect from the shattered,
And the fall'n from them that stand,
And the sheep-flock from the goat-herd
Shall part on either hand:
And these shall pass to torment,
And those shall to rest,
The new peculiar nation,
The fulness of the Blest.

JERUSALEM demands them:
They paid the price on earth,
And now shall reap the harvest
In blissfulness and mirth:

The glorious holy people,
  Who evermore relied
Upon their Chief and Father,
  The King, the Crucified:
The sacred ransomed number
  Now bright with endless sheen,
Who made the Cross their watchword
  Of Jesus Nazarene:
Who, fed with heavenly nectar,
  Where soul-like odors play,
Draw out the endless leisure
  Of that long vernal day:
While through the sacred lilies,
  And flowers on every side,
The happy dear-bought nations
  Go wandering far and wide.
Their breasts are filled with gladness,
  Their mouths are tuned to praise,
What time, now safe forever,
  On former sins they gaze:
The fouler was the error,
  The sadder was the fall,
The ampler are the praises
  Of Him who pardoned all
Their one and only anthem,
  The fulness of His love,
Who gives instead of torment,
  Eternal joys above:

Instead of torment, glory;
  Instead of death, that life
Wherewith your happy Country,
  True Israelites! is rife.

BRIEF life is here our portion;
  Brief sorrow, short-lived care:
The life that knows no ending,
  The tearless life, is *There*.
O happy retribution!
  Short toil, eternal rest;
For mortals and for sinner
  A mansion with the blest!
That we should look, poor wand'rers,
  To have our home on high!
That worms should seek for dwellings
  Beyond the starry sky!
To all one happy guerdon
  Of one celestial grace;
For all, for all, who mourn their fall,
  Is one eternal place:
And martyrdom hath roses
  Upon that heavenly ground:
And white and virgin lilies
  For virgin-souls abound.
There grief is turned to pleasure:
  Such pleasure, as below
No human voice can utter,
  No human heart can know.

And after fleshly scandal,
And after this world's night,
And after storm and whirlwind
Is calm, and joy, and light.
And now we fight the battle,
But then shall wear the crown
Of full and everlasting
And passionless renown:
And now we watch and struggle
And now we live in hope,
And Syon, in her anguish,
With Babylon must cope:
But He Whom now we trust in
Shall then be seen and known,
And they that know and see Him
Shall have Him for their own.
The miserable pleasures
Of the body shall decay:
The bland and flattering struggles
Of the flesh shall pass away:
And none shall there be jealous;
And none shall there contend:
Fraud, clamor, guile—what say I?—
All ill, all ill shall end!
And there is David's Fountain,
And life in fullest glow,
And there the light is golden,
And milk and honey flow:
The light that hath no evening,
The health that hath no sore,

The life that hath no ending,
  But lasteth evermore.
There Jesus shall embrace us,
  There Jesus be embraced,—
That spirit's food and sunshine
  Whence meaner love is chased.
Amidst the happy chorus,
  A place, however low,
Shall show Him us; and showing,
  Shall satiate evermo.
By hope we struggle onward,
  While here we must be fed
With milk, as tender infants,
  But there with Living Bread.

THE night was full of terror,
  The morn is bright with gladness,
  The Cross becomes our harbor,
  And we triumph after sadness;
And Jesus to His true ones
  Brings trophies fair to see:
And Jesus shall be loved, and
  Beheld in Galilee.
Beheld, when morn shall waken,
  And shadows shall decay,
And each true-hearted servant
  Shall shine as doth the day:
And every ear shall hear it;—
  Behold thy King's array;

Behold thy God in beauty;
  The Law hath passed away!
Yes! God, my King and Portion,
  In fulness of His grace,
We then shall see forever,
  And worship face to face.

THEN Jacob into Israel,
  From earthlier self-estranged,
And Leah into Rachel
  Forever shall be changed:
Then all the halls of Syon
  For aye shall be complete;
And, in the Land of Beauty,
  All things of beauty meet.

FOR thee, O dear, dear Country!
  Mine eyes their vigils keep;
For very love, beholding
  Thy happy name, they weep;
The mention of thy glory
  Is unction to the breast,
And medicine in sickness,
  And love, and life, and rest.
O one, O onely Mansion!
  O Paradise of Joy!
Where tears are ever banished,
  And smiles have no alloy;

Beside thy living waters
All plants are, great and small,
The cedar of the forest,
The hyssop of the wall.
With jaspers glow thy bulwarks;
Thy streets with emeralds blaze;
The sardius and the topaz
Unite in thee their rays:
Thine ageless walls are bounded
With amethyst unpriced;
Thy saints build up its fabric,
And the corner-stone is Christ.

THE Cross is all thy splendor,
The Crucified thy praise:
His laud and benediction
Thy ransomed people raise;
Jesus, the Gem of Beauty,
True God and Man, they sing;
The never-failing Garden,
The ever-golden Ring:
The Door, the Pledge, the Husband,
The Guardian of His Court;
The Day-star of Salvation,
The Porter and the Port;
Thou hast no shore, fair ocean!
Thou has no time, bright day!
Dear fountain of refreshment
To pilgrims far away!

Upon the Rock of Ages
They raise thy holy tower:
Thine is the victor's laurel,
And thine the golden dower:
Thou feel'st in mystic rapture,
O Bride, that knowest no guile,
The Prince's sweetest kisses,
The Prince's loveliest smile:
Unfading lilies, bracelets
Of living pearl, thine own;
The Lamb is ever near thee,
The Bridegroom thine alone;
The Crown is He to guerdon,
The Buckler to protect,
And He Himself the Mansion,
And He the Architect.
The only art thou needest,
Thanksgiving for thy lot:
The only joy thou seekest,
The Life where Death is not.
And all thine endless leisure
In sweetest accents sings,
The ill that was thy merit,—
The wealth that is thy King's!

JERUSALEM the Golden,
With milk and honey blest,
Beneath thy contemplation
Sink heart and voice oppressed:

I know not, O, I know not,
What social joys are there;
What radiancy of glory,
What light beyond compare!

And when I fain would sing them,
My spirit fails and faints,—
And vainly would it image
The assembly of the Saints.

They stand, those halls of Syon,
Conjubilant with song,
And bright with many an angel,
And all the martyr throng:

The Prince is ever in them;
The daylight is serene;
The pastures of the blessed
Are decked in glorious sheen.

There is the throne of David,—
And there, from care released,
The song of them that triumph,
The shouts of them that feast;

And they who, with their Leader,
Have conquered in the fight,
Forever and forever
Are clad in robes of white.

O holy, placid harp-notes
  Of that eternal hymn!
O sacred sweet reflection,
  And peace of Seraphim!

O thirst, forever ardent,
  Yet evermore content!
O true, peculiar vision
  Of God cunctipotent!
Ye know the many mansions
  For many a glorious name,
And divers retributions
  That divers merits claim:
For the midst constellations
  That deck our earthly sky,
This star than that is brighter,—
  And so it is on high.

JERUSALEM the glorious!
  The glory of the Elect!
O dear and future vision
  That eager hearts expect:
Even now by faith I see thee:
  Even here thy walls discern:
To thee my thoughts are kindled,
  And strive and pant and yearn!
Jerusalem the onely,
  That look'st from heaven below
In thee is all my glory;
  In me is all my woe;

And though my body may not,
My spirit seeks thee fain,
Till flesh and earth return me
To flesh and earth again.
Oh, none can tell thy bulwarks
How gloriously they rise:
Oh, none can tell thy capitals
Of beautiful device:
Thy loveliness oppresses
All human thought and heart:
And none, O peace, O Syon,
Can sing thee as thou art.

NEW mansion of new people,
Whom God's own love and light
Promote, increase, make holy,
Identify, unite.
Thou City of the Angels!
Thou City of the Lord!
Whose everlasting music
Is the glorious decachord!
And there the band of Prophets
United praise ascribes,
And there the twelvefold chorus
Of Israel's ransomed tribes:
The lily-beds of virgins,
The roses' martyr-glow,
The cohort of the Fathers
Who kept the faith below.

And there the Sole-Begotten
  Is Lord in regal state;
He, Judah's mystic Lion,
  He, Lamb Immaculate.
O fields that know no sorrow!
  O state that fears no strife!
O princely bow'rs! O land of flow'rs!
  O Realm and Home of Life!

JERUSALEM, exulting
  On that securest shore,
I hope thee, wish thee, sing thee,
  And love thee evermore!
I ask not for my merit:
  I seek not to deny
My merit is destruction,
  A child of wrath am I:
But yet with Faith I venture
  And Hope upon my way;
For those perennial guerdons
  I labor night and day.
The Best and Dearest Father
  Who made me and Who saved.
Bore with me in defilement,
  And from defilement laved:
When in His strength I struggle,
  For very joy I leap;
When in my sin I totter,
  I weep, or try to weep:
And grace, sweet grace celestial
  Shall all its love display,

And David's Royal Fountain
  Purge every sin away.
O mine, my golden Syon!
  O lovelier far than gold!
With laurel-girt battalions,
  And safe victorious fold:
O sweet and blessed Country,
  Shall I ever see thy face?
O sweet and blessed Country,
  Shall I ever will thy grace?
I *know* the hope within me
  To comfort and to bless!
Shall I ever win the prize itself?
  O tell me, tell me, yes!
Exult, O dust and ashes!
  The Lord shall be thy part;
His only, His forever,
  Thou shalt be, and thou art!
Exult, O dust and ashes!
  The Lord shall be thy part:
His only, His forever,
  Thou shalt be, and thou art!